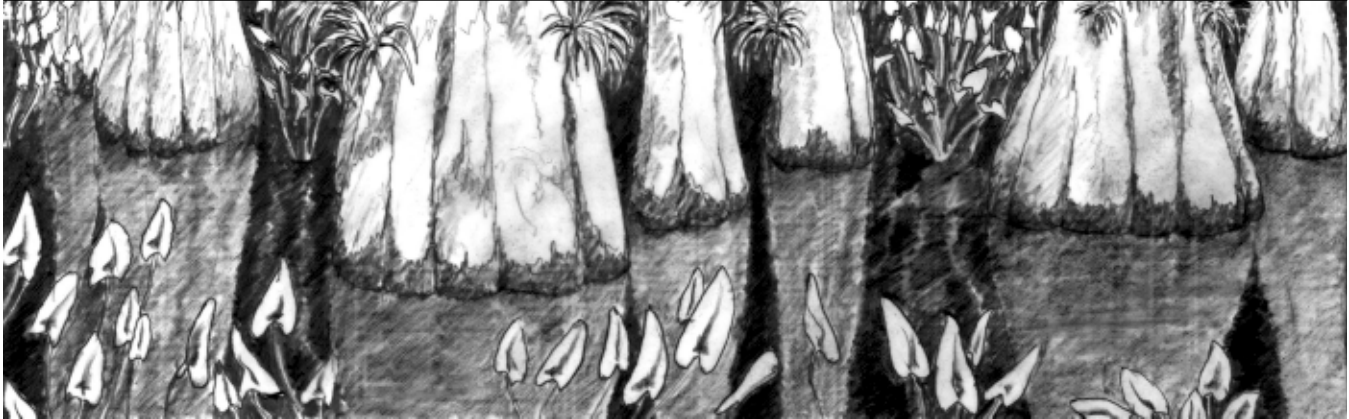


**BIG CYPRESS NATIONAL PRESERVE
ADDITION LANDS GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN**



Dear Friends:

This month, we are beginning our general management planning process for the Addition Lands portion of Big Cypress National Preserve and invite all members of the public and concerned agencies to participate as fully as possible in this multi-year effort to determine the best alternative for managing these unique public lands. In 1988, 147,280 acres, known as the Addition, were added to Big Cypress National Preserve. This represented an area increase of 30% over the original Preserve. The current general management plan for the Preserve does not address the lands in the Addition and the complex visitor management and resource issues and needs of this new area. How should we ensure that the resources of the Addition are protected, restored, and maintained unimpaired for future generations? Given the legislative mandates governing uses allowed within the Addition, how should we answer the questions: Where should various uses occur? How should they be managed so that all of these important resources are protected?

We need your ideas on these and other questions. The National Park Service process for general management planning to address the Addition's numerous management issues and guide management of these lands over the next 10-15 years can not be completed without comprehensive public participation.

We encourage you to participate in the planning process. Planning cannot be done in a vacuum, and it will not succeed without your involvement. Your views and ideas are important to us. We are now in the "scoping" stage of this planning process. This is your first opportunity to help us plan the future for the Addition to Big Cypress. We want to hear what issues and concerns are important to all of the citizens of the United States. What do you believe the plan should address? What is your vision for the future of the Addition? This newsletter provides information about the planning process and how you can get involved.

Please note that the Preserve is also currently preparing a management plan and environmental impact statement for oil and gas operations in the Preserve. This document will contain specific guidance for managing the exploration and production of nonfederal oil and gas underlying both the original boundaries of the Preserve as well as the Addition Lands.

We look forward to your participation. Big Cypress National Preserve is a wonderful resource. Let's work together to provide appropriate stewardship of this land so that future generations may enjoy the Preserve as we do.

Sincerely,

John Donahue
Superintendent, Big Cypress National Preserve

CONTACT US

**For more information
please contact
Shellie Grayson at
(941) 695-1114 or e-mail at
bicy_gmp_planning@nps.gov**

**You can also log on to the
NPS planning page at
www.nps.gov/planning
or the park web page at
www.nps.gov/bicy**

ABOUT GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLANS

The General Management Plan — What is it?

The general management plan (GMP) will identify an overall direction for future management of the Addition. It will provide a framework for managers to use when making decisions about such issues as how to best protect resources, what levels and types of uses are appropriate, what facilities should be developed, and how people should access the lands within the Addition.

The GMP will not directly address land acquisition and it will not provide detailed development plans (only general locations where certain types of development would be appropriate). It also will not include detailed management actions, but will identify desired resource conditions and visitor experiences that would be appropriate for each area of the Addition and the strategies for achieving those conditions.

To comply with the National Environmental Policy Act, and National Park Service policy, an environmental impact statement will be prepared concurrently with the GMP. The GMP/environmental impact statement will identify significant issues and concerns, present a reasonable range of management alternatives, and analyze the environmental impacts of each of the alternatives.

What is the planning process?

There are four broad steps in the planning process. During the first step, the planning team reaffirms the purpose, significance, and mission of the Preserve, including the Addition; identifies issues and desired futures; and collects data related to the issues. This information provides the foundation for the planning effort. All proposed actions in the plan must be consistent with this foundation. The second step includes compiling and analyzing public comments on issues and visions for the Addition's future; and identifying alternative approaches for managing the Addition. The third step consists of identifying a preferred alternative and preparing a draft GMP/environmental impact statement that will evaluate the environmental impacts of the management alternatives. During the final step of the process, a final GMP/Environmental Impact Statement is prepared and includes responses to public comments on the draft document. The accompanying chart lists these steps as well as projected completion dates and opportunities for public involvement.

General Management Plan Steps			
Step	Activity	Date	Public Involvement
1.	Gather Information, identify issues and visions for the Addition's future	Spring/Summer 2001	Public scoping meetings and Newsletter/Response Form
2.	Develop and evaluate management alternatives	Summer 2001 to Spring 2002	Public meetings and Newsletter/Response Form
3.	Identify a preferred alternative and prepare and publish a draft GMP/EIS	Summer 2002 to Winter 2003	Review/Comment on Draft Plan and Public meetings
4.	Revise and publish a final GMP/EIS	Spring 2003 to Fall 2003	Final Plan distributed to public

PURPOSE OF THE PRESERVE AND LEGISLATIVE MANDATES

Purpose statements tell why the Preserve, including the Addition, was permanently set aside as part of the national park system, and provide the foundation for management and use. The statements are based on the enabling legislation (PL 93-440 and PL 100-301) and laws and policies governing the management of all national parks.

Big Cypress National Preserve was established in 1974 by PL 93-440. Congress set aside the Preserve for the following reason:

- As part of the Big Cypress watershed, the purpose of Big Cypress National Preserve is to ensure the protection of its natural, scenic, hydrologic, floral and faunal, and recreational values.

The enabling legislation states that the preserve, as a unit of the national park system, is to be managed in a manner that will ensure its “natural and ecological integrity in perpetuity.” The legislation further states the management of the area should be in accordance “with the provisions of the Act of August 25, 1916” (NPS Organic Act). Thus, the natural and ecological integrity of the preserve is the fundamental value that Congress directed the National Park Service to protect.

Congress also directed that limits or controls be established with respect to activities such as the use of motorized vehicles, grazing, agriculture, hunting, fishing, trapping, new construction, construction of structures that alter natural watercourses, and the exploration for and extraction of oil, gas, and other minerals. The enabling legislation directs the Secretary of the Interior to develop appropriate rules and regulations to carry out the purpose of the act, protecting the natural and ecological integrity of the watershed.

The act provides the following management guidance on “usual and customary use and occupancy” of the preserve by members of the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida and the Seminole Tribe of Florida:

“Members of the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida and the Seminole Tribe of Florida shall be permitted, subject to reasonable regulations established by the Secretary, to continue their usual and customary use and occupancy of Federal or federally acquired lands and waters within the preserve.”

In addition, the act provides the following guidance regarding improved properties and oil and gas rights:

“No improved property, as defined by this Act, nor oil and gas rights, shall be acquired without consent of the owner unless the Secretary, in his judgement, determines that such property is subject to, or threatened with, uses which are, or would be detrimental to the purpose of the preserve.”

The Preserve’s boundary was expanded in 1988 by PL 100-301 to include 147, 280 acres of adjacent lands. The primary purposes of the Addition Lands are to:

- Protect the natural, scenic, hydrologic, floral and faunal, and recreational values of the Big Cypress watershed
- Limit development pressure on lands bordering the Preserve that are important fish and wildlife habitat supporting endangered species, and wetlands that are the headwaters of the Preserve
- Enhance protection of Everglades National Park while providing recreational opportunities and other public uses offered by the Preserve

The act also stipulated that the National Park Service and other involved federal agencies cooperate with the state of Florida to establish recreational access points and roads, rest and recreation areas, wildlife protection, hunting, fishing, frogging, and other traditional opportunities in conjunction with the creation of the Addition and the construction of Interstate Highway 75.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PRESERVE

Significance statements identify the resources and values central to managing the Preserve and express the importance of the Preserve to our natural and cultural heritage. They help managers make decisions that preserve the resources and values necessary to accomplish the area’s purpose.

Big Cypress National Preserve contains vestiges of primitive southwest Florida. It is significant as a unit of the national park system because it:

- is a watershed that is key to the survival of Everglades National Park and to the integrity of the entire South Florida ecosystem
- is a large wetland mosaic that supports a vast remnant of vegetation types found only in this mix of upland and wetland environments
- it contains the largest stands of dwarf cypress known
- is habitat for many animal and plant species that receive special protection or are recognized by the state of Florida, the U.S. government, or the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
- is accessible to the public for the pursuit of resource-based recreation
- possesses significant prehistoric, historical, and contemporary cultural sites and landscapes
- remains home to the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida and Seminole Tribe of Florida and sustains resources that are important to their cultures

WHAT ISSUES SHOULD BE ADDRESSED BY THE GMP ?

Following is a preliminary list of issues to be addressed in this general management plan. We need to hear your ideas and comments on this list and about additional issues and concerns.

Visitor experiences - Are visitor opportunities and visitor experiences within the Addition limited due to resource condition, conflicts between user groups, or access to the Preserve? Can this be improved? Potentially competing uses include off-road vehicles, biking, boating, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, and general sight-seeing.

Threatened and endangered species - The Addition contains habitat for the Florida panther as well as numerous other protected species. Protection of threatened and endangered species and impacts of potential development and use on these species and their habitats needs to be addressed.

Hunting - Prior to acquisition of lands within the Addition by the federal government, these lands were privately owned and closed to the public. Some of these lands were leased for recreational purposes including hunting.

Off-Road Vehicle Use - The management strategy for the use of off-road vehicles (ORVs) in the original boundaries of the Preserve is outlined in the October 2000 "Off-Road Vehicle Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement". This ORV plan did not address use of ORVs in the Addition. The management strategy for use of ORVs in the Addition will be addressed in this current planning effort.

Hiking - A 15 to 20 mile extension of the Florida National Scenic Trail needs to be planned and located. The plan will provide general guidance for this effort.

Regional population growth - The Addition is within a two-hour drive from the east coast, west coast, and Orlando urban centers. The population in this region is expected to grow dramatically. Facilities to address the access and recreational needs of this population need to be addressed.

Administration and operations - Road access to the Addition requires an 80 to 110 mile round trip from Preserve headquarters. This long distance and resulting travel time make administration and operations in the Addition difficult. The plan will address methods to ensure effective protection, wildfire and resource patrols, and research.

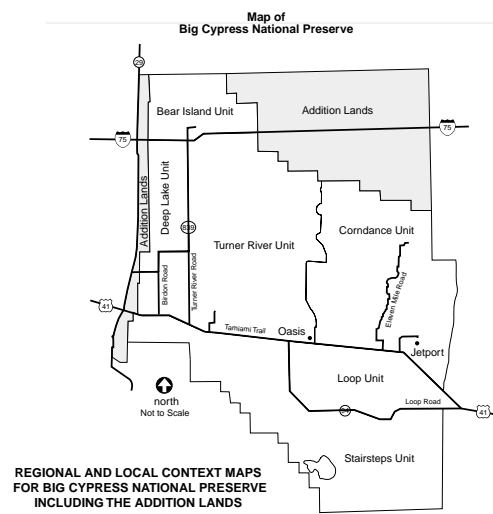
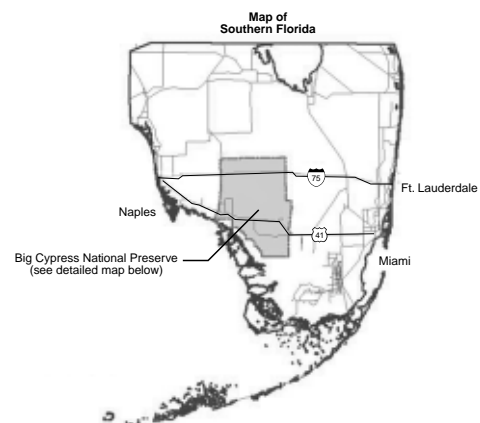
Adjacent land use - Adjacent lands are subject to agricultural and residential development and land management practices that could impact the Preserve's resources. Uses of these lands could affect natural water flows, water quality, and biological communities. Strategies to minimize negative impacts need to be addressed.

Oil and gas development - Privately owned oil and gas rights exist within the Addition. Mineral exploration and development can effect hydrology, plant communities, threatened and endangered species, and other resources. These issues will be addressed in the oil and gas management plan.

WHERE ARE WE NOW AND WHAT CAN YOU DO?

We are now in step 1. To make the process work, and to ensure that public views and concerns are addressed, we need your feedback. You can participate in the first step of the planning process by filling out the enclosed comment form and returning it to the park service planning team. In addition, you can attend public scoping meetings where you will have an opportunity to present your ideas, questions, and concerns directly to the planning team.

Please be aware that due to public disclosure requirements, the National Park Service, if requested, is required to make the names and addresses of commenters public. However, individual respondents may request that this information not be released. The National Park Service will then determine whether the information can be withheld under the Freedom of Information Act, and we will honor your request to the extent allowed by law. If you wish us to withhold your name and/or address, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment. We will make all submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives of officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection in their entirety.



REGIONAL AND LOCAL CONTEXT MAPS FOR BIG CYPRESS NATIONAL PRESERVE INCLUDING THE ADDITION LANDS

ADDITION LANDS GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE MEETINGS ANNOUNCEMENT

Public open house meetings will be held on dates and at locations listed below. Those attending the meetings will be encouraged to visit one or more information stations set up at the meeting site to learn more about the general management planning process and provide comments and suggestions about the Addition Land's mission and future management. This meeting is intended to be an informal information-sharing opportunity. Prepared presentations by the planning team or other interested individuals will not be part of the program at this meeting.

Meeting dates, times, and locations

Monday, July 30, 2001

Location:

Everglades City: Everglades City School, 415 School Drive, Everglades City, Florida 34139

Time:

3:30pm to 7:30pm. Come and leave at your leisure, open house meeting format

Tuesday, July 31, 2001

Location:

Naples: The Conservancy of Southwest Florida, 1450 Merihue Drive, Naples, Florida 34102

Time:

3:30pm to 7:30pm. Come and leave at your leisure, open house meeting format

Wednesday, August 1, 2001

Location:

Seminole Tribe of Florida Reservation: Frank Billie Center, CR 833, Clewiston, Florida 33440

Time:

3:30pm to 7:30pm. Come and leave at your leisure, open house meeting format

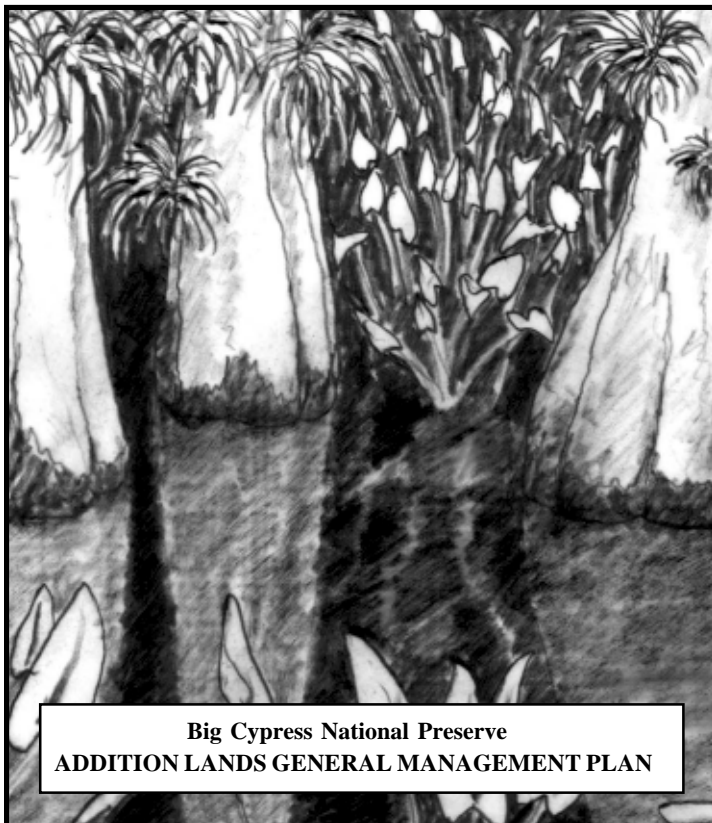
Thursday, August 2, 2001

Location:

Miami: Miami-Dade County Fair and Exposition, Main Gate North End Building, 10901 Coral Way, Miami, Florida 33165

Time:

3:30pm to 7:30pm. Come and leave at your leisure, open house meeting format



Big Cypress National Preserve
ADDITION LANDS GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

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See newsletter for additional meeting details

Superintendent
Big Cypress National Preserve
HCR 61, Box 110
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